CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for processing graphical objects for layout, comprising:

defining a first graphical object and a second graphical object, the first graphical object having a first size preference and the second graphical object having a second size preference, the first and second size preferences each comprising a size and elastic properties; and

subtracting the second size preference from the first size preference, resulting in a resultant size preference dependent on the size preferences of the graphical objects.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

computing the size of the resultant size preference by subtracting the size of the second size preference from the size of the first size preference.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the size of the resultant size preference has a minimum value of zero.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties and further comprising:

determining the compression properties of the resultant size preference from the compression properties of the first size preference and the stretch properties of the second size preference.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and further comprising:

setting the compression properties of the resultant size preference equal to the stretch properties of the second size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is less than the stretch order of the second size preference.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and further comprising:

setting the compression properties of the resultant size preference equal to the compression properties of the first size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is greater than the stretch order of the second size preference.

7. The method of claim 4, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order and a compressibility coefficient, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order and a stretchiness coefficient, and further comprising:

setting the compressibility coefficient of the resultant size preference equal to the sum of the compressibility coefficient of the first size preference and the stretchiness coefficient of the second size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is equal to the stretch order of the second size preference.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties, and further comprising:

determining the stretch properties of the resultant size preference from stretch properties of the first size preference and compression properties of the second size preference.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and further comprising:

setting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference equal to the compression properties of the second size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is less than the compress order of the second size preference.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and further comprising:

setting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference equal to the stretch properties of the first size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is greater than the compress order of the second size preference.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order and a compressibility coefficient, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order and a stretchiness coefficient, and further comprising:

setting the stretchiness coefficient of the resultant size preference equal to the sum of the stretchiness coefficient of the first size preference and the compressibility coefficient of the second size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is equal to the compress order of the second size preference.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties, and further comprising instructions for:

adjusting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference to be at least as compliant as the compression properties of the resultant size preference.

13. A system for processing graphical objects for layout, comprising:

a layout processor defining a first graphical object and a second graphical object, the first graphical object having a first size preference and the second graphical object having a second size preference, the first and second size preferences each comprising a size and elastic properties; and

the layout processor subtracting the second size preference from the first size preference, resulting in a resultant size preference dependent on the size preferences of the graphical objects.

14. The system of claim 13, wherein the size of the resultant size preference is computed by the layout processor subtracting the size of the second size preference from the size of the first size preference

15. The system of claim 13, wherein the size of the resultant size preference has a minimum value of zero.

16. The system of claim 13, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties; and

the layout processor determining the compression properties of the resultant size preference from the compression properties of the first size preference and the stretch properties of the second size preference.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order; and

the layout processor setting the compression properties of the resultant size preference equal to the stretch properties of the second size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is less than the stretch order of the second size preference.

18. The system of claim 16, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order; and

the layout processor setting the compression properties of the resultant size preference equal to the compression properties of the first size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is greater than the stretch order of the second size preference.

19. The system of claim 16, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order and a compressibility coefficient, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order and a stretchiness coefficient; and

the layout processor setting the compressibility coefficient of the resultant size preference equal to the sum of the compressibility coefficient of the first size preference and the stretchiness coefficient of the second size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is equal to the stretch order of the second size preference.

20. The system of claim 13, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties; and

the layout processor determining the stretch properties of the resultant size preference from stretch properties of the first size preference and compression properties of the second size preference.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order; and

the layout processor setting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference equal to the compression properties of the second size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is less than the compress order of the second size preference.

22. The system of claim 20, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order; and

the layout processor setting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference equal to the stretch properties of the first size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is greater than the compress order of the second size preference.

23. The system of claim 20, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order and a compressibility coefficient, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order and a stretchiness coefficient; and

the layout processor setting the stretchiness coefficient of the resultant size preference equal to the sum of the stretchiness coefficient of the first size preference and the compressibility coefficient of the second size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is equal to the compress order of the second size preference.

24. The system of claim 13, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties; and

the layout processor adjusting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference to be at least as compliant as the compression properties of the resultant size preference.

25. A computer program product comprising:

a computer-usable medium;

a set of computer operating instructions embodied on the medium, including instructions for processing graphical objects for layout, comprising instructions for:

defining a first graphical object and a second graphical object, the first graphical object having a first size preference and the second graphical object having a second size preference, the first and second size preferences each comprising a size and elastic properties; and

subtracting the second size preference from the first size preference, resulting in a resultant size preference dependent on the size preferences of the graphical objects.

26. The computer program product of claim 25, further comprising instructions for:

computing the size of the resultant size preference by subtracting the size of the second size preference from the size of the first size preference.

27. The computer program product of claim 26, wherein the size of the resultant size preference has a minimum value of zero.

28. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties and further comprising instructions for:

determining the compression properties of the resultant size preference from the compression properties of the first size preference and the stretch properties of the second size preference.

29. The computer program product of claim 28, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and further comprising instructions for:

setting the compression properties of the resultant size preference equal to the stretch properties of the second size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is less than the stretch order of the second size preference.

30. The computer program product of claim 28, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and further comprising instructions for:

setting the compression properties of the resultant size preference equal to the compression properties of the first size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is greater than the stretch order of the second size preference.

31. The computer program product of claim 28, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order and a compressibility coefficient, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order and a stretchiness coefficient, and further comprising instructions for:

setting the compressibility coefficient of the resultant size preference equal to the sum of the compressibility coefficient of the first size preference and the stretchiness coefficient of the second size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is equal to the stretch order of the second size preference.

32. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties, and further comprising instructions for:

determining the stretch properties of the resultant size preference from stretch properties of the first size preference and compression properties of the second size preference.

33. The computer program product of claim 32, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and further comprising instructions for:

setting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference equal to the compression properties of the second size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is less than the compress order of the second size preference.

34. The computer program product of claim 32, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and further comprising instructions for:

setting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference equal to the stretch properties of the first size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is greater than the compress order of the second size preference.

35. The computer program product of claim 32, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order and a compressibility coefficient, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order and a stretchiness coefficient, and further comprising instructions for:

setting the stretchiness coefficient of the resultant size preference equal to the sum of the stretchiness coefficient of the first size preference and the compressibility coefficient of the second size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is equal to the compress order of the second size preference.

36. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties, and further comprising instructions for:

adjusting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference to be at least as compliant as the compression properties of the resultant size preference.

37. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave comprising a code segment for processing graphical objects for layout, the code segment comprising instructions for:

defining a first graphical object and a second graphical object, the first graphical object having a first size preference and the second graphical object having a second size preference, the first and second size preferences each comprising a size and elastic properties; and

subtracting the second size preference from the first size preference, resulting in a resultant size preference dependent on the size preferences of the graphical objects.

38. The computer data signal of claim 37, wherein the code segment further comprises instructions for:

computing the size of the resultant size preference by subtracting the size of the second size preference from the size of the first size preference.

39. The computer data signal of claim 38, wherein the size of the resultant size preference has a minimum value of zero.

40. The computer data signal of claim 37, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

determining the compression properties of the resultant size preference from the compression properties of the first size preference and the stretch properties of the second size preference.

41. The computer data signal of claim 40, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

setting the compression properties of the resultant size preference equal to the stretch properties of the second size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is less than the stretch order of the second size preference.

42. The computer data signal of claim 40, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

setting the compression properties of the resultant size preference equal to the compression properties of the first size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is greater than the stretch order of the second size preference.

43. The computer data signal of claim 40, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order and a compressibility coefficient, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order and a stretchiness coefficient, and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

setting the compressibility coefficient of the resultant size preference equal to the sum of the compressibility coefficient of the first

size preference and the stretchiness coefficient of the second size preference if the compress order of the first size preference is equal to the stretch order of the second size preference.

44. The computer data signal of claim 37, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties, and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

determining the stretch properties of the resultant size preference from stretch properties of the first size preference and compression properties of the second size preference.

45. The computer data signal of claim 44, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

setting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference equal to the compression properties of the second size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is less than the compress order of the second size preference.

46. The computer data signal of claim 44, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order, the stretch properties comprise a stretch order, and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

setting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference equal to the stretch properties of the first size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is greater than the compress order of the second size preference.

47. The computer data signal of claim 44, wherein the compression properties comprise a compress order and a compressibility coefficient, the stretch

properties comprise a stretch order and a stretchiness coefficient, and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

setting the stretchiness coefficient of the resultant size preference equal to the sum of the stretchiness coefficient of the first size preference and the compressibility coefficient of the second size preference if the stretch order of the first size preference is equal to the compress order of the second size preference.

48. The computer data signal of claim 37, wherein the elastic properties comprise stretch properties and compression properties, and the code segment further comprising instructions for:

adjusting the stretch properties of the resultant size preference to be at least as compliant as the compression properties of the resultant size preference.